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New Task Force to Check for Soviet Arms-Control Violations

Associated Press

President Reagan has decided to hold off charging the Soviet Union with violating arms-control agreements while an interagency task force makes further checks, administration officials disclosed yesterday.

The new panel will be drawn from the National Security Council, the CIA, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other federal agencies with experts in verifying Soviet compliance with the treaties, the officials said.

The administration has concluded tentatively that the Soviets circumvented provisions of the 1979 Strategic Arms Limitation Talks treaty with a missile test Feb. 8. The treaty was never ratified, but both nations agreed to abide by its terms.

Conservatives in Congress have urged Reagan to go public with such an allegation as a means of undercutting the nuclear freeze movement and bolstering his case for increased defense spending.

The 1979 treaty limits the United States and the Soviet Union to testing one new intercontinental ballistic missile. The Soviets gave notification they had conducted their allowed test in late October. The Pentagon is questioning the Feb. 8 test

on the grounds it involves variations in the SS13 missile in ways that could give it the capacity to carry several warheads, in effect creating a new ICBM. Soviet compliance with a 1974 agreement limiting underground nuclear tests also is questioned by the United States.

At a March 29 news conference, Reagan said "we have reason to believe that there have been numerous violations," and in a speech in Los Angeles two days later he said that he was prepared to charge the Soviets with several treaty violations. He gave no details but said he might do so "in the near future."